

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAMA 0471

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS : MARR, XF, BA, OVIP (CLEMENTS, WILLIAM P.)

SUBJECT : DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS VISIT TO BAHRAIN

1. DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS HAD EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH AMIR OF BAHRAIN APRIL 17 IN OVER HALF HOUR MEETING ATTENDED BY PRIME MINISTER, FOREIGN MINISTER AND CROWN PRINCE/ DEFENSE MINISTER. SUBSTANTIVE IMPORTANCE WHICH AMIR ATTACHED TO EXCHANGE WITH SECRETARY CLEMENTS EVIDENCED BY FACT THIS IS FIRST TIME HE HAS TALKED IN ARABIC, WITH FOREIGN MINISTER TRANSLATING, TO OFFICIAL AMERICANS SINCE INFORMING CHARGE' OF DECISION TO OUST MIDDLE EAST FORCE IN 1973.

2. SECRETARY CLEMENTS MADE STRONG AND EFFECTIVE APPROACH ALONG GENERAL LINES MANAMA 446, STRESSING U.S. DETERMINATION TO PROCEED ACTIVELY IN PURSUIT OF MIDDLE EAST PEACE AND U.S. CONCERN FOR AND WILLINGNESS TO CONTRIBUTE TO EFFORTS OF GULF STATES TO PROVIDE FOR THEIR OWN SECURITY AND STABILITY. IN RESPONSE AMIR, WITH FOREIGN MINISTER OCCASIONALLY AMPLIFYING HIS REMARKS AS WELL AS TRANSLATING THEM, REPEATEDLY NOTED GOB'S LONG-STANDING FRIENDSHIP WITH U.S. AND ITS WELCOME OF AN INCREASINGLY ACTIVE U.S. ROLE IN SAUDI ARABIA IN PARTICULAR AND IN GULF AND MIDDLE EAST GENERALLY.

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3. MENTIONING HE HAD DISCUSSED IMPORTANCE US NAVY PRESENCE IN GULF WITH PRINCE FAHD, WHO SUPPORTED IT, SECRETARY CLEMENTS EXPRESSED APPRECIATION THAT QUESTION OF CONTINUED MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE HAS APPARENTLY BEEN SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVED. BAHRAINIS REPLIED, AFTER NOTING THEIR WELCOME OF U.S. NAVY PRESENCE, THAT "NEGOTIATIONS NOW IN FINAL STAGES" AND GOB SOON WILL TAKE FORMAL DECISION. (AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: EARLIER IN WEEK, I TRIED SOME PLOY ON AMIR WHO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT MIDDLE EAST FORCE QUESTION HAD BEEN SUCCESSFULLY RESOLVED AND LAUGHED ABOUT FACT THAT FOREIGN MINISTER HAD NOT YET PUSHED THROUGH THE FINAL PAPERWORK. IN THIS LIGHT I HAVE NO BASIS FOR DOUBTING GOB INTENTIONS ON MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS ALTHOUGH IT IS POSSIBLE GOB MAY BE WAITING UNTIL PARLIAMENT RECESSES IN JUNE TO EXCHANGE DOCUMENTS.)

4. SECRETARY CLEMENTS NOTED USEFUL NATURE HIS JUST CONCLUDED DISCUSSIONS IN SAUDI ARABIA; DETERMINATION USG TO MOVE ACTIVELY TO SUPPORT SAUDI DEVELOPMENT PLANS; AND OUR IMPRESSION THAT LEADERSHIP TRANSITION IN SAUDI ARABIA HAD BEEN NOTABLY SMOOTH. AMIR WELCOMED THESE ASSESSMENTS AND OUR ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF SAG BUT TURNING TO BROADER MIDDLE EAST SITUATION GENERALLY STRESSED IMPORTANCE GOB ATTACHES TO ROLE OF SADAT AS MODERATE, PRO-WESTERN ARAB LEADER SEEKING PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT AND GOB'S CONCERN ABOUT PRESSURES FACING SADAT. SECRETARY CLEMENTS, MENTIONING U.S. POLICY REASSESSMENT AND PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY KISSINGER'S DETERMINATION TO PUSH ON WITH QUEST FOR PEACE, EXPRESSED PERSONAL CONFIDENCE THAT CONSTRUCTIVE MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT WOULD TAKE PLACE IN COMING MONTHS PRIOR TO RECONVENING OF GENEVA CONFERENCE AND PERSONAL OPTIMISM THAT HOSTILITIES ARE NOT ON VERGE OF BEING RENEWED. AMIR, STRESSING GOB'S SUPPORT FOR U.S. ROLE IN PEACE SETTLEMENT, MAINTAINED HE IS "OPTIMISTIC" ABOUT PEACE PROSPECTS. (AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST TIME IN RECENT MONTHS THAT AMIR HAS EXPRESSED OPTIMISM ABOUT MIDDLE EAST SITUATION.)

5. SECRETARY CLEMENTS REFERRED TO SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE IN INDIAN OCEAN AND SOVIET FACILITIES IN SOMALIA. THIS LED AMIR TO ASSESSMENT OF (A) SOVIET INTENTIONS IN THE MIDDLE CONFIDENTIAL

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EAST: SOVIETS ARE SEEKING EXPLOIT EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO DESTABILIZE AREA AND TO "GAIN FOOTHOLD" AND IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS DEVELOP IN MANNER CLOSING DOOR TO SOVIETS AND (B) ROLE OF PDRY: GOB FEELS IT ESSENTIAL THAT ARABS, LED BY SAUDI ARABIA, BRING PDRY INTO MODERATE FOLD TO PREVENT SOVIETS, ONCE SUEZ CANAL REOPENED, FROM EXPLOITING SOUTH YEMEN'S POLITICAL ISOLATION AND POVERTY TO ESTABLISH MAJOR SOVIET FOOTHOLD IN SOUTH OF

PENINSULA. FOREIGN MINISTER EXPANDED ON THIS POINT NOTING GOB HAD BEEN APPROACHED BY PDRY FOR RELATIONS BUT HAD REFUSED TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS WITH SOUTH YEMEN UNTIL SAUDI ARABIA DOES SO. HE INDICATED THAT ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS AT APRIL 21 MEETING PLAN TO PERSUADE SAUDI ARABIA TO FOCUS ON SOUTH YEMEN PROBLEM AND TO REACH SOME KIND OF ACCOMMODATION WITH PDRY. SECRETARY CLEMENTS NOTED THAT IF THIS IS GOB'S STRATEGY, TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE IN PERSUADING SAUDI ARABIA TO TAKE LEAD IN RECONCILING ARAB RELATIONS WITH PDRY SINCE SUEZ CANAL APPARENTLY WILL BE OPENED SHORTLY.

6. IN RESPONSE TO SECRETARY CLEMENTS' QUESTION AMIR AND FOREIGN MINISTER GAVE NOTABLY BLAND AND OPTIMISTIC ASSESSMENT OF RECENT IRAN-IRAQ ACCORD ALONG LINES THAT ANYTHING RELIEVING ANTAGONISM BETWEEN MAJOR GULF POWERS WAS BENEFICIAL TO STABILITY OF GULF AREA INCLUDING BAHRAIN. (AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: AMIR SEEMED TO BE SPEAKING FOR RECORD ON THIS ONE SINCE HIS OWN PRIVATE ASSESSMENT OF IRAQI INTENTIONS GENERALLY AND VIABILITY OF IRAN-IRAQ ACCORD IN PARTICULAR HAS TO DATE BEEN NOTABLY LESS SANGUINE.)

7. NEAR END OF DISCUSSION FOREIGN MINISTER URGED AT SOME LENGTH THAT U.S. INTERESTS IN MIDDLE EAST AS A WHOLE, UNLIKE "TRANSIENT U.S. INTERESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA", ARE LONG-STANDING AND MAJOR AND NOW IS TIME FOR USG TO BE FORMULATING A LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR STRENGTHENING ITS RELATIONS WITH ALL THE MIDDLE EAST. SECRETARY CLEMENTS RESPONDED PERSUASIVELY TO THIS PRESENTATION, NOTING USG'S INTENSE INTEREST IN MIDDLE EAST AND EFFORTS TO WORK OUT LONG-TERM GOOD RELATIONSHIPS WITH ENTIRE AREA.

8. AMIR NOTED IMPORTANCE GOB ATTACHES TO SECRETARY CLEMENTS' VISIT AS MANIFESTATION OF STRONG U.S.-BAHRAINI RELATIONS AND ASKED SECRETARY TO CONVEY HIS WISH THAT PRESIDENT FORD AND

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SECRETARY KISSINGER AT SOME POINT VISIT BAHRAIN.

9. AMBASSADOR'S COMMENT: SECRETARY CLEMENTS' VISIT PROVIDED EXTREMELY USEFUL OPPORTUNITY FOR HIGH LEVEL USG EXCHANGE WITH GOB; BAHRAINI LEADERS OBVIOUSLY APPRECIATED OPPORTUNITY AND SECRETARY CLEMENTS WAS QUITE PERSUASIVE IN INDICATING TO THEM USG'S INTEREST IN AND DESIRE FOR COOPERATION WITH BAHRAIN AND OTHER STATES OF AREA.

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